

Testimony for Monday March 9, 2009  
Education Committee  
Regarding SB Bill 830



Honorable Gaffey, Honorable Fleishman, and Honorable members of the Education Committee, I am Madeleine Diker, Food Service Director for the Cheshire Public Schools Child Nutrition Program. I am also a former president and current member of the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut. SNACT is a non profit organization made up of 585 food service professionals across the state.

I am here today to speak to the serious concerns that our food service directors in our organization have in regard to proposed legislation introduced by Senator McKinney and Representative Cafero in the Governor's Bill No. 830 LCO No 2980.

The bill, in essence proposes cutting the Healthy Nutrition Certification funding in half from ten cents to five cents a meal. **Why is this significant? Our number one priority is the nutritional well being of our students.** We place emphasis on purchasing high quality food items that fit in with the Healthy Connecticut Nutrition Standards. If our funding is drastically reduced by 50% child nutrition programs that are Certified Healthy may not be able to afford to purchase the healthier options such as whole grains, fresh cut up produce and reduced fat, and low sodium items on a daily basis.

These are difficult times in Connecticut. Children eligible for free and reduced meals went up 30% in Cheshire. The total of non sufficient checks that the Cheshire Food and Nutrition Office have received over the past 3 months is more than the past 3 years combined. Parents have lost their jobs and have to cut costs at home. One of the things that the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut is concerned about is that families may cut back on fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains, and other nutrient dense foods in order to make ends meet. This would be a sad, but if **"Healthy Certified Districts" had to reduce how often they could offer nutrient dense foods due to a funding reduction that would be shameful!**

In addition, it was 23 years of no increases for School Lunch funding by Connecticut State, and a tough fight right here at the state capitol, to get the "Healthy Certified" 10 cents a meal. To cut this funding in half would be unacceptable.

As a reminder, if a district certifies and follows the CT Nutrition Standards they are eligible to receive 10 cents per meal. The 10 cents per meal began in 2006-07. The total funding for 2008-09 is \$3,271,523. If Bill 830 were approved as written, in terms of the reduction to the states budget, the Healthy Certified cut would be a reduction of approximately \$1,635,761.

The CT Nutrition standard addresses the nutritional content of all food items sold to students separately from a reimbursable school lunch or breakfast. The standards focus on decreasing fat, saturated fats, trans fats, sodium sugars, moderating portion sizes and increasing the consumption of nutrient rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy lean meat and legumes. All schools and any district that chooses to comply with healthy food certification under Section 10-215f of the CT general statutes must follow the CT Nutrition Standards for all sources of food sales to students, including but not limited to school cafeterias, vending machines, school stores and many fund raising activities on school premises. Basically the entire campus is healthy, no matter where the child goes.

Connecticut leads the nation in serving healthy nutritious options. Our industry partners have changed the formulations of the products they offer and sell to reflect the Connecticut standards. The Connecticut Nutrition standards are not only good for the individual child's health but also benefits businesses by encouraging the development of new products and has resulted in an emerging niche market of healthy options in the school food service industry.

Please do not support Bill 830 as written or any bill that would reduce the funding on this important topic of child nutrition, and health.

Thank you.

Respectfully Madeleine C. Diker